

ACCESS AMERICA

ARTS IN AMERICA

Summer Music Festivals Dot Landscape Across America

Genres include jazz, classical, folk, blues, country, rock and



Americans enjoy a large variety of performers at music festivals throughout the summer months.

Washington -- The hills are alive with the sound of music -- and so are the valleys and the flatlands.

As Americans seek out live entertainment this summer, they'll find music festivals abounding from coast to coast and border to border. A recent New York Times compilation previewed almost 100 music festivals in 33 states, and the list was nowhere near exhaustive.

The fare at music festivals large and small includes classical concerts, Broadway show music, folk, jazz, blues, country, bluegrass and rock. In fact, some of the more ambitious festivals offer all those genres in a single season. For example, the summer concert series at the Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts in Vienna, Virginia, runs from May to September and draws thousands of music lovers annually. Performers this summer range from road companies of Broadway shows like *Rent* and *Les Miserables* to the "Riverdance" Irish dance company and individual artists including singers Gladys Knight, Donna Summer and Smokey Robinson, and saxophonist Kenny G.

Also in this issue

From the IRC.....	2
Film: The Rise of Independent Films.....	2
Alumni Highlight.....	3
Music: Hip-Hop Inspires Other Art Forms.	3
Fulbright Program Announcement.....	3
Alumni Spotlight.....	4
Events Calendar.....	4

In addition to music festivals, entertainment seekers can find many summer theater festivals taking places across the country as well. At these festivals, theater troupes present works ranging from stage classics to new plays by current authors -- with many performances by works of William Shakespeare in the mix. "All the world's a stage," Shakespeare once famously wrote, and summertime events across America go far toward proving the point.

This article is adapted from an article on America.gov, a web site delivering information about current U.S. foreign policy and about American life and culture produced by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs.

From the Ambassador

President John F. Kennedy once said, "If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him." This month, we celebrate the creativity and spirit that artists, musicians, dancers, filmmakers, and other performers of the United States share. Since 1965, The National Endowment for the Arts has sought to bring art to all Americans by establishing regional theater organizations, operas, ballets, symphony orchestras and museums. The work of American artists, and of the National Endowment, has enriched our society. As we celebrate what artists have given our country, we recognize too the vital role they play in building communication across cultures. Art is a universal language. By sponsoring, hosting, and attending international art festivals, Americans seek to break down barriers between nations. Through art, we increase understanding of our common humanity.

—Robert F. Godec

From the IRC

Check out the following materials for more information on Arts in America.

BOOKS:

Edgerton, Gary R. *The Columbia history of American television*

New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. **791.45097 EDG**

Lev, Peter. *The Fifties: Transforming the screen 1950-1959*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. **791.43097 LEV**

American cinema of the 1970s: Themes and variations. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007. **791.43097309047 AME**

Anderson, Iain. *This is our music: Free Jazz, the sixties, and American culture*.

Pennsylvania University Pennsylvania Press, 2007. **781.655 AND**

Starr, Larry. *American popular music: From minstrelsy to MP3*. 2nd. ed.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. **781.640973 STA**

Ward, Brian. *Just my soul responding: rhythm and blues, Black consciousness, and race relations*. Berkeley [Calif.] : University of California Press, c1998. **781.64309 WAR**

VISUALS: VIDEOS & DVDs

Blues : *Feel like going home*. Washington, D.C.: 2004. **DOC 169**

Chaos and ordermaking American theater. Washington, D.C. 2005. **DOC 768**

Soundmix. Washington, D.C.: 2006. **DOC 767**

— *Khaled Ben Bhousid*

ARTS IN AMERICA

American Independent Films Encourage Self-Expression

Low-cost productions result in diverse, popular new American films

Over the past 20 years, a parallel American movie industry, the independent film world, has grown up and prospered. It has its own annual festival (Sundance in Park City, Utah) and its own version of the Oscars (the Independent Spirit Awards, held a few days before the Academy Awards). There are even theaters that specialize in only showing independent films and actors and directors who do mostly independent work.

When a Hollywood film costs \$100 million plus, as the average studio film does, it has to appeal to the widest possible audience, in the United States and all around the world, in order to make its money back. Independent films, by contrast, cost less: they can be made for anywhere from a few thousand dollars to \$15 million to \$20 million. Lower costs allow filmmakers to be more personal, more idiosyncratic, more concerned with character and story than hi-tech special effects. Independent film-makers can focus more on artistry and self-expression and less about what will work at the box office, which is one of the reasons "Indy films" tend to do better at the Oscars than the big moneymakers.

In 1989, Steven Soderbergh's *sex, lies, and videotape* won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance and went on to take the Palme d'Or at Cannes, beginning the international recognition of American independent film. Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* did that film one better, not only winning the Palme in 1994 but becoming the first independent film to earn more than \$100 million at the box office. Soon every studio, understanding that independent films were too different to be made by their regular

personnel, wanted to have an independent arm of its own. The films these specialty divisions make are the top-of-the-line independent films, the ones with the biggest budgets and biggest stars. These films may seem like Hollywood movies, but the reality is that Hollywood isn't making these kinds of films anymore. A case in point is *Little Miss Sunshine*. Though the film was nominated for best picture and its script ended up winning an Oscar in 2007, it had been turned down numerous times by the major studios.

Independent films can reflect different constituencies and tell different kinds of stories. Because independent films don't have to cost a fortune, the indie world is a place where African-American directors like Spike Lee and gay directors like Gregg Araki have been able to make films that deal with marginalized characters but potentially speak to a broad audience.



Kenneth Turan is the author of several books and a film critic for the Los Angeles Times newspaper and for Morning Edition on National Public Radio. This article is an excerpt from his article "The Rise of the Independents" published in the eJournalUSA "The Movie Business Today."

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT

“This is not a week of summer camp”

YES program alumna shares her experiences from her exchange in Hawaii with the US Ambassador and friends

On July 10, at a reception for YES program alumni held at the U.S. Ambassador's residence, Zohra Souei spoke about her experiences as an exchange student this past year in the U.S.:

“The decision to leave my home, family, friends, and culture was not easy at all. But my father once told me that we learn to swim while we are in the water, not while standing on the shore wondering if it was possible to swim. So when I first heard about the YES program, I said, ‘This is my opportunity to get in there by myself and prove what a teenager’s enthusiasm and ambition could do.’

From the fifty states I could have been sent to, I got lucky and went to Hawaii. The whole sixteen years of

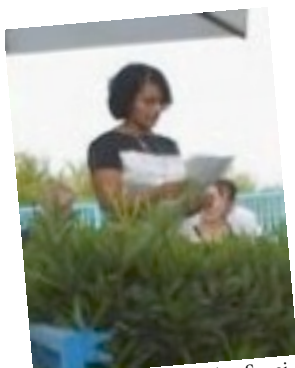


Photo courtesy of Zohra Souei

my life, the experiences I’ve been through and the relationships I had, were just lessons, and the test had started: a test in how to face the world alone; a test in how to represent your culture to people who probably have never heard about your country.

Before coming to the States I didn’t have any idea about how people would treat each other, what the lifestyle is like. But now I can affirm that as any other place in the world, I saw parents raising their children with love, youth looking up to their future, friends standing by each other for worse or better, neighbors working together to help better their community, and communities standing up for their rights and asking for peace.

It would sound very wrong to say that I didn’t change, because in a way or another I did. What I know right now is that I feel more self confident than ever before, more experienced, and that I have gained a lot of knowledge that I am eager to share. This experience helped me discover a lot of hidden sides within myself that if I hadn’t gone through this year, it would take me years to do so or probably even never to find them out.

I will never be able to explain how proud I am when I look back on this experience, and never be able to thank the YES program enough for this wonderful opportunity. This is a huge step for change: in my life and the lives of hundreds of teenagers all over the world.”

ARTS IN AMERICA

Hip-Hop Exerts Influence on Contemporary Portraiture

Genre inspires musicians, painters, photographers, poets, filmmakers



©:Stockphoto / peeters

Washington -- Hip-hop always has been a potent vehicle for creative expression, but its role in contemporary portraiture has received little attention -- until now. A new exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery in Washington --

RECOGNIZE! Hip Hop and Contemporary

Portraiture -- reveals how artists working in a variety of media create portraits filtered through the prism of hip-hop culture. *Continued on PAGE 4*

FULBRIGHT ANNOUNCEMENT

Visiting Scholar Program 2009-2010

Fulbright Visiting Scholars conduct research, give lectures, or pursue a combination of the two in the United States for 3 to 10 months. Benefits include international roundtrip airfare, health insurance, and a stipend for housing and meals.

For more information contact **Ms. Faouzia Ben Kheder** at benkhederf@state.gov or 71-107-438, or visit: http://www.cies.org/vs_scholars/vs_awards/

The deadline for submitting applications is October 20, 2008.

All applicants are welcome. Special consideration will be given to applicants in Business, Environmental Science, Law, Finance, Public Health, Health Administration, and Public Administration. Proficiency in the English language is required.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Photo courtesy of Ahmed Fouili

Ahmed Touili**Fulbright****Visiting Scholar****Home in Tunisia:**
Tunis**Home in the U.S.:**
Norfolk, Virginia**My experience:**

I taught Arabic to students in the department of English and foreign languages at Norfolk State University. In addition, I gave lectures in Washington, DC, Austin, Texas, and Detroit, Michigan. I also spent a day on board a 100-year-old skipjack in Annapolis, exploring the natural wonders of the largest and most productive estuary in the U.S., the Chesapeake Bay.

Fondest Memory of the U.S.: To have American friends and to have collaborated with my American colleagues.

Advice for others: Study, work hard, and be open-minded!

Continued from PAGE 3

Hip-hop emerged as both a cultural movement and a genre of music in New York City during the 1970s. Developed primarily by African Americans, it is now embraced by youth culture on nearly every continent.

Frank H. Goodyear III, one of the three curators of RECOGNIZE!, concedes that hip-hop's image has suffered because the lyrics to so-called "gangsta" rap songs are criticized for promoting violence and misogyny. Yet hip-hop often is misunderstood by people "whose only contact with the genre is through the media's portrayal of its excesses," he said in a recent interview. "This exhibition is an attempt to appreciate anew how creative, beautiful, uplifting and inclusive it can be."

The exhibition will run at the National Portrait Gallery until October 26, 2008.

This article is adapted from an article on America.gov, a web site delivering information about current U.S. foreign policy and about American life and culture produced by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs.

Calendar**University of Southern Florida Dance Troupe**

Multi-cultural dance performance set to music from around the world.

August 7 - Ezzahra

For ticketing information, please contact The American Center at the U.S. Embassy

Summer Film Series: Multiculturalism in the U.S.

presented at the American Corner at AMIDEAST

Friday, August 8**2:00 PM**

Spanglish

Friday, August 15**2:00 PM**

The Pursuit of Happyness

Friday, August 22**2:00 PM**

Hairspray

Friday, August 29**2:00 PM**

In America (Tentative)

Free English Conversation**Every Thursday**

American Corner at AMIDEAST
2:00 PM

Weekly discussions on topics from films and music to religion. Topics are posted weekly at AMIDEAST.

Study in the USA Consultations**Every Tuesday-Friday**

AMIDEAST Advising Resource Library
8:30-3:30 PM

Browse materials from U.S. universities, consult resources on applications and scholarships.

American Corner at AMIDEAST
22, Rue Al Amine al Abassi, Cite des Jardins, 1002 tunis-Belvedere, tel. 71-790-563 ext. 106

The American Corner is Open All Summer Long, 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM

Please stop by and visit!

**The American Center**

U.S. Embassy Tunis
Public Affairs Section

Les Berges du Lac
1053 TUNIS, Tunisia

Tel. +216 71-107-000

Fax +21671-963-263

E-mail:

tuniswebsitecontact@state.gov

Web site:

<http://tunis.usembassy.gov>